

Notice of Allowability

Application No.

09/244,019

Examiner

Tuan V. Thai

Applicant(s)

HATANO ET AL.

Art Unit

2186

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to Request for RCE and amendment filed 07/22/04.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 11-37 renumbered as 1-8, 10-16, 18-25, 27, 9, 17 and 26 respectively.
3. ☒ The drawings filed on 04 February 1999 are accepted by the Examiner.
4. ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of the:
 1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
 - * Certified copies not received: _____.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.
THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

5. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
 6. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
 - (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
 - 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date _____.
 - (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
7. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

1. ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3. ☐ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08), Paper No./Mail Date _____
4. ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material
5. ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6. ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413), Paper No./Mail Date _____
7. ☐ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8. ☒ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9. ☐ Other _____

TUAN V. THAI
PRIMARY EXAMINER

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Attorney's Docket No.: 8014-1032

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND
TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of: Hatano et al. Group: 2186
Serial No.: 09/244,019 Examiner: Tuan Thai
For: *APPARATUS FOR AND METHOD OF RETRIEVING INFORMATION.*

1. This action is responsive to amendment filed July 22, 2004.
Claims 1-18, 20 and 26 have been canceled. Claims 1-10 have
been cancelled, claims 35-37 are newly added. Claims 11-37 are
now allowed.

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

2. An Examiner's Amendment to the record appears below. Should
the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an
amendment may be filed as provided by 37 C.F.R. § 1.312. To
ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted
no later than the payment of the Issue Fee.

3. Authorization for this Examiner's Amendment was given in a
telephone interview with Mr. Roland E. Long; Reg. No. 41,949 on
September 07, 2004.

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4. The application has been amended as follows:

a. In the claims:

a1. Please amend claim 35 as follow:

Claim 35. (amended) On line 2, change "claim 1" to read --claim 11--.

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

5. The following is an Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance:

The prior art of record does not teach or suggest, alone or in combination, **all** the limitations of the independent claims of the current invention (claims 11, 19, 26 and 34) wherein a apparatus and method for retrieving target information from a plurality of candidates comprising storage means from storing plurality of candidates in a hierarchical structure including multiple hierarchies, an output means for outputting a message requesting a user to input a reply, input means for a user to input the reply, and searching means for searching candidates as to a plurality of hierarchies in the hierarchical structure to determine a corresponding candidate to the reply, wherein the next message which requests the user to input the next reply is

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further output from the output means based on the corresponding candidate until the corresponding candidate becomes the target information.

Claims 12-18, 20-25, 27-33 and 35-37 further limit the allowable independent claims 11, 19 and 26. These claims are therefore allowable for the same reason as set forth above.

Any comments considered necessary by Applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the Issue Fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the Issue Fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Tuan V. Thai whose telephone number is (703) 305-3842. The examiner can normally be reached on from 6:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M..

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mathew M. Kim can be reached on (703) -305-3821. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status

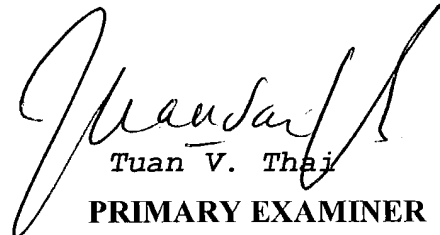
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information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

TVT/September 07, 2004



Tuan V. Thai
PRIMARY EXAMINER
Group 2100